

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 09242 072117Z

13

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8231

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION NATO

USEC BRUSSELS

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, SP

SUBJECT: WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS (EUROPEAN BRANCH) MEETING IN
MADRID DECEMBER 4-6 1976.

1. ALTHOUGH THE EVENT RECEIVED LITTLE PUBLICITY AND WAS
COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED BY THE SPANISH SOCIALIST
PARTY (PSOE) CONGRESS, THE EUROPEAN BRANCH OF THE WORLD
JEWISH CONGRESS (WJC) MET IN MADRID DECEMBER 4-6. SOME
90 DELEGATES FROM WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE WERE IN
ATTENDANCE HEADED BY 84 YEAR OLD WJC PRESIDENT DR. NAHUM
GOLDMAN. MR. HELIOUA, S SAANISH INDUSTRIALIST WHO HEADS
MADRID'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE
INITIATIVE FOR THE MADRID MEETING WAS TAKEN BY SPAIN'S
12,000 STRONG JEWISH COMMUNITY (UNITED IN THE FEDERATION

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PAGE 02 MADRID 09242 072117Z

OF SEPHARDIC COMMUNITIES). "TO SHOW THAT ATTITUDES TOWARDS

JEWS HAVE CHANGED " SINCE JUAN CARLOS SUCCEEDED FRANCO. THE DECISION OF THE WJC TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION WAS A GESTURE OF "POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR CHANGING SPAIN", ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE AGENDA INCLUDED ITEMS ON A) ISRAEL'S POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, B) THE PROBLEMS OF JEWS IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE, C) ANTI SEMITISM IN EUROPE, AND D) REPORTS FROM THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN ITALY, WEST GERMANY, GREECE, AND GREAT BRITAIN.

2. LORD FISHER OF CAMDEN (BRITISH), ADDRESSING THE GROUP, NOTED THAT "SENTIMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE" OF THIS FIRST MEETING IN SPAIN SINCE THE JEWS WERE EXPELLED FOR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS REASONS IN 1492. AFTER ALLUDING TO THE BENEFITS OF A POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SPAIN AND ISRAEL, HE DIPLOMATICALLY EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THIS WJC MEETING WOULD NOT DAMAGE HISPANO ARAB FRIENDSHIP.

3. HOJA DEL LUNES OF DECEMBER 6, QUOTING FOREIGN PRESS REACTION, DESCRIBED THE MEETING AS AN ATTEMPT BY THE SPANISH MONARCHY TO BRIDGE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN MADRID AND TEL AVIV. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS ALSO CREDITED FOR ITS ROLE IN LESSENING TRADITIONAL SPANISH ANTI-SEMITISM, ACCORDING TO A WIRE SERVICE REPORT, THE GOV CANCELLED AT THE LAST MOMENT THE PARTICIPATION OF AN OFFICIAL GOVT REPRESENTATIVE AT THE CONFERENCE (REPORTEDLY UNDER SECRETARY OF JUSTICE RAFAEL MENDJABEL), APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF ARAB PRESSURE IT IS REPORTED THAT THE DELEGATES HAD SET UP MEETINGS WITH MODERATE AND LEFTIST OPPOSITION LEADERS (EXCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS). IT WAS ALSO REPORTED THAT KING JUAN CARLOS MIGHT RECEIVE GOLDMAN AND OTHER SELECTED DELEGATES DECEMBER 6 AND 7 FINALLY ON DECEMBER 7, SPANISH JEWS WILL CELEBRATE THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE OF THE FIRST OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED JEWISH SCHOOL SINCE THE INQUISITION.

4. COMMENT. A WELL PLACED CATHOLIC CHURCH OFFICIAL EXPRESSED HIS GREAT SATISFACTION TO THE EMBASSY DECEMBER 6 AS REGARDED THE "HISTORIC" JEWISH MEETING IN SPAIN. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT QUEEN SOFIA ATTENDED A JEWISH RELIGIOUS SERVICE IN MADRID'S SUNAGOGUE PRIOR TO THE ROYAL COUPLE'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MADRID 09242 072117Z

VISIT TO THE U.S. LAST SUMMER. ALTHOUGH THE QUEEN DID NOT MAKE A FORMAL ADDRESS, SHE DID DELIVER SOME REMARKS. MORE RECENTLY SPAIN'S OFFICIAL CHANGE IN ATTITUDE WAS FURTHER DEMONSTRATED WHEN THE KING LUNCHEDED WITH ISAAC NAVON (VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT) IN SEPTEMBER DURING THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE.

5. AN ISRAELI (HISTRADUT) DELEGATE TO THE PSOE CONGRESS

TOLD EMBASSY THAT PLO ACTIVIST (LATER REPORTED AS NUMBERING ABOUT 100) HAD DEMONSTRATED AGAINST THE WJC MEETING IN FRONT OF THE MADRID HOTEL WHERE IT WAS TAKING PLACE. HE FURTHER US THAT THE ARAB EMBASSIES IN MADRID HAD GONE EN BLOC TO PROTEST TO THE GOVT ABOUT THE WJC MEETING, AND PREVAILED UPON THE GOS TO CANCEL ITS PLANNED PARTICIPATION. WE WOULD COMMENT THAT THIS OF COURSE EMPHASIZES THE DELICATE TIGHTWIRE SPAIN MUST WALK IN ORDER NOT TO JEOPARDIZE ITS PRO ARAB POLICY. STABLER

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